

JESSE BETHKE GOMEZ, PRESIDENT OF CLUES
A LATINO LEADER'S POSITION STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION REFORM
(MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 2006)

It is clear that immigration is a point of contention in Minnesota and for the United States in 2006. In order to fix the broken immigration system, a comprehensive plan is required. Adequate legal channels and immigration law reform must be considered in order to better serve the economic, social and security interests of the United States. Additionally, any and all reform must provide safeguards, worker rights and adequate protection for immigrant workers and their families.

Immigration plays a major role in our economic well-being. According to a New York Times article published on April 5, 2005, titled: Way North of the Border (by Eduardo Porter and Elisabeth Malkin), it is estimated that unauthorized migrant workers contribute significantly to the \$50 billion dollars that annually goes to the Social Security Earnings Suspense File, \$6 billion dollars a year in social security tax revenues, and \$1.5 billion dollars in Medicare taxes; all of which is a net gain for our social security fund and healthcare crisis.

The United States has a Federal Gross Debt of \$8.1 trillion dollars, which is 65% of our GDP. Our economy will need to perform optimally for many years to come in order to pay it down. Taxes that remain uncollected by unauthorized workers are currently beyond estimation and do contribute to the reduction of our nation's debt. The employment of migrant workers, (authorized and unauthorized), historically and currently in the United States is a net gain in our ability to reduce the Federal Gross Debt of \$8.1 trillion dollars. Immigration reform needs to provide for the orderly transition of unauthorized migrant workers to become authorized, all migrant workers are playing a vital role in our economy. Employers also must play an active role in this transition, as they are increasingly dependent on this much needed workforce.

Trade relations are also at stake in our effort to reform the immigration system. We must recognize that Canada and Mexico are the United States' top two trading partners (70% of our exports combined). We need immigration reform that also acknowledges and builds upon our economic strengths so that we expand prosperity regionally as a North American Hemispheric Alliance.

The proposed McCain-Kennedy legislation known as the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act has bi-partisan support. and is receiving growing and strong support from a wide variety of organizations including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, The Essential Worker Immigration Coalition, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Services International Union.

As Minnesotans, let us join the national conversation on the need for thoughtful, respectful and civil immigration reform. We need orderly and balanced immigration reform so that we can advance, as One Nation under God, a National plan that will allow for a safer and more secure America. We need a plan that will allow our newest members of society as authorized workers to work alongside U.S. workers - together seeking a better life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness. With a strong National resolve on immigration reform, we then can find National purpose as One Nation - to begin to address the looming economic issues before us such as the Federal Gross Debt of \$8.1 trillion dollars. Let us look forward to the day that we advance the economic prosperity and ability for people to care for one another over the next several generations - so that our best days are ahead of us in this new century and in this new era.

For more information regarding Jesse Bethke Gomez's statement, please contact Stacy Opitz, Public Relations Manager for Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES) at 651-379-4212 or sopitz@clues.org.